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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV, USPACOM FOR FPA HUSO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND MARKED BY INCREASE
IN CIVILIAN BEHEADINGS

[11.](#) (U) Summary: Assailants, suspected to be Muslim separatists, beheaded a Thai civilian in broad daylight at a teashop in Narathiwat province on June 22, the fifth beheading of civilians, all believed to be Buddhist, during this month. Three male Muslim volunteer teachers were shot to death at home in the same province earlier this week. In two separate roadside bombings this month, three Buddhist monks have been injured, although none were killed. Some Muslim leaders said the beheadings were reprisal attacks for the arrest and/or suspected extra judicial killing of suspected Muslim separatists. End Summary.

[12.](#) (U) A disturbing increase in civilian beheadings, believed to be the work of unidentified Muslim separatists, has hit the troubled far south of Thailand. In Narathiwat province on June 22, Lek Pongpa, a 34-year-old itinerant clothing salesman from the Northern province of Nan, was beheaded at a teashop after being shot twice by two armed men riding on a motorcycle. The shop owner, who along with other onlookers witnessed the incident, was quoted in local press accounts as saying that the victim tried to flee after being shot twice, but one of the attackers chased after him and cut off his head with a machete. On June 19, two Lao national migrant workers reportedly were beheaded where they were working at a chicken farm in Pattani province. Two other beheadings took place in separate incidents in Pattani and Yala on June 5 and [14.](#) One victim was a 65-year-old retired teacher, the other a 59-year-old rubber tapper. In some of the recent cases, the attackers left notes with the bodies of victims stating that more civilians would be killed to avenge the arrest of innocent Muslims. (Note: There have been a total of 10 beheadings reported since violence in the South began following a raid on a military camp by Muslim separatists in Narathiwat in January 2004. Two took place in May and June 2004, three others in November 2004. The beheadings occurred in the following provinces: Narathiwat: 4, Pattani: 4, and Yala: 2. End Note.)

[13.](#) (U) In a June 20 incident that may have led to the latest beheading, three men described as "volunteer teachers" at an Islamic religious school in Pattani province, were shot and killed, reportedly while conducting evening prayers. Media reports indicated that RTG officials claim the men were killed by Muslim insurgents, who wanted to "silence them" for cooperation with local officials. Muslim civil society leaders and officials have described those killings otherwise, alleging that they were a type of extra judicial killing by Thai police. The Governor of Pattani claimed that printed material advocating the liberation of Pattani were found at the murder scene. Thai police claimed that at least one of the victims was a suspect in other violent attacks in southern Thailand.

[14.](#) (U) Attacks on Buddhist monks continue in Narathiwat province. Two monks, together with three women and two policemen escorting them on their morning alms round, were slightly injured by a small roadside bomb on June 22. This is the second time this month that Buddhist monks accompanied by police or military escorts have fallen victim to roadside bombing incidents.

[15.](#) (U) There continue to be nearly daily shooting incidents of low-level government officials in the south. A deputy village headman in Yala province was gunned down in his house on the night of June 21. Media reports claimed that suspected militants attempted to behead the victim before fleeing after the man's son entered the house.

[15.](#) (SBU) Comment: Over the last 19 months, over 700 people have lost their lives in various acts of violence in southern Thailand. The people who live and work in the southern border areas have for many years lived with guns and violence as part of their lives making it difficult to differentiate between separatist and "routine" violence. Most Muslims and the Thai government acknowledge that some of the killings are personal business scores or other vendettas. Nonetheless, the clearly intentional use of beheadings, and the apparent targeting of Buddhist monks, constitutes a worrying mix that for Thais of all backgrounds and faiths and adds a shocking emotional crescendo to the already heightened ethnic and religious tensions in the affected communities. End

Comment.
BOYCE